Unit 3a: Russian Orthodox Religious History

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will

Be aware of the following

- **Long-lasting impact of Vladimir I's decision to adopt Eastern Orthodox Christianity**
- **High moral standing of the Russian Orthodox leadership during Mongol rule**
- **Issues involved in the possessor/non-possessor controversy of the late-medieval Russian Orthodox Church**
- **Significance of Moscow as the "Third Rome"**
- **Factors leading to establishment of a Russian patriarchy in 1589**
- **Subservient position of Russian patriarchs to the Tzar**
- **Distinctives of the Ukrainian Catholic (Uniate) Church**
- **Issues behind the "Old Behavior" schism**
- **High value Orthodox place on ritual, ceremony and formalism**
- **Church reforms under Peter the Great and their long-lasting impact**
- **Tie between Russian Orthodoxy and Russification imposition**
- **Communist ideology and religion**
- **Pattern of conformism practiced after Patriarch Tikhon**
- **Waves of persecution against the Russian Orthodox Church while under Communist rule**
- **Impact of World War II - and resultant relaxed restrictions on Russian Orthodox practice**
- **Results of observing the millennial celebration in Russian Orthodoxy**
- **Cause of the recent (1996) Russian Orthodox/Ecumenical Patriarchate rift**
- **Benefactor religious groups of the September 1997 Orthodox Protection Law**

Identify

- **Byzantium, Constantinople**
- **Ostrogoths, liturgy, Hagia Sophia, St. Cyril and St. Methodius**
- **Vladimir I, dvoeverie, Mongols, Tartars, metropolitan**
- **Hesychast, Mt. Athos, St. Sergius, patriarch**
- **Possessors/non-possessors**
- **Third Rome, Union of Brest, Uniate**
- **Old Church Slavonic, Patriarch Nikon**
- **Raskol, Holy Governing Synod, Ober-Procurator**
- **St. Seraphim, Russification, Patriarch Tikhon**
- **"Renovated" or "Living" Church**
- **Great Patriotic War, underground church**
- **Freedom of Conscience Laws--1990**
- **Perestroika, glasnost**
- **Church of the Savior Cathedral, Ecumenical Patriarch, September 1997 Orthodox Protection Law**

Realize

- **Closeness of church/state relations in Byzantine and Russian history**
- **Importance of saints in Russian Orthodox development**
- **Significance of monks and monasteries in Russian Orthodox practice**
- **Difference between a metropolitan and patriarch**
- **Historic religious rivalry between Moscow and Kiev**
- **Extent of persecution against "old believers" early in the controversy**
- **Power acquired by land-controlling clergy prior to Catherine the Great**
- **Reasons for the decline of the clergy after Catherine the Great**
- **Factors behind the Renovated/Living Church controversy**
- **Current religious resurgence in Russia today**

Unit 3 a: Russian Orthodox Religious History

"Take care of the peasant and guard his heart. Go on educating him quietly. That's your duty as monks, for the peasant has God in his heart."
-- Fydor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 377

"In old societies they knew that a church and an authoritative priest were needed to maintain morality. Even now, what...peasant woman would undertake a serious step without the counsel of her priest?"
-- Alekasandr Solzhenitsyn, The First Circle, p. 483

"The historical faith of Russia is Orthodoxy, and Orthodoxy is deeply embedded in the Russian soul. It defines a Russian's sense of nation, history, and identity, even when the individual is not devout. I have heard many Russians say that they are not believers, but they do know which the true faith is."
-- Nathaniel Davis, A Long Walk to Church, pp. 222-223

I. Russian Orthodox Origins

1. Byzantine Civilization (BIZ-ahn-teen)

Under Roman emperor Constantine I (ruled A.D. 324-337) and Theodosias I (ruled 379-393), Christianity became Rome's established religion. Constantine chose, as the new capital of the Roman Empire Constantinople, formerly called Byzantium. In time, Constantinople surpassed Rome in importance. While Rome fell to the Ostrogoths (OST-roh-goth) in A.D. 476, Constantinople (the "Second Rome") continued as the head of the Eastern Roman Empire for another 1,000 years.

a. Hagia Sophia

Constantinople's Church of Divine Wisdom or Hagia Sophia (high-EE-ah) was the center of Eastern Orthodoxy. Built by Justinian in the 6th century, it was the largest and most splendid Christian religious structure then in existence. The liturgy (formal public worship service) of this church,

called the 9th-century Byzantine Rite, became the common worship pattern for Eastern Orthodox churches.

b. Mission movements Expansion of Byzantine Christianity occurred throughout eastern Europe. Greek Orthodox missionaries St. Cyril (SIR-ahl, A.D. 827-869) and his brother St. Methodius (mah-THOO-dee-ahs, @825-885), the "Apostles to the Slavs," spread Orthodoxy to the Slavic peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. In the 9th century, Bulgaria became an Orthodox nation under Tzar Boris (852-889), establishing its own administratively independent patriarchate (place of official church jurisdiction). Bulgarian religious leaders would serve as intermediaries for Orthodox Russians until 1448.

c. Kievan Russia interaction Exchanges in trade and culture between the Byzantine empire and Russia took place from early times. By the time of Vladimir I, contacts also were maintained with Muslims near the Volga River and southeast regions as well as with Jewish Khazars.

d. Vladimir I When envoys of Kievan prince Vladimir went looking for a religion for the Rus to follow, their report from Constantinople's Hagia Sophia won over Vladimir. Reported the emissaries, *"We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere upon earth."*

e. Impact of Vladimir's decision In choosing the Eastern flank of Christendom, the following significant trends of thought and practice entered Russian culture.

(1) Byzantine culture Vladimir opened and fused Russia to the highly developed Byzantine culture of the time. Russians engaged in trade and commerce with their Eastern counterparts. They adopted and adapted Byzantine architecture and art.

(2) Isolation and suspicion of the West In part, the early Russians turned their backs on 10th century European, Latin, non-Christian civilizations. Isolation from and suspicion of the rest of Europe were a long term result.

(3) Church and state In Byzantium, church/state religions tended to commingle. The civil head of state was closely allied to the Church. Legally, the emperor had an obligation for the moral development of the people. A sense of community, brotherhood and togetherness, embodied in law and church tradition, became commonplace.

(4) National culture Historian Nicholas Riasanovsky argues that Vladimir's choice of Constantinople "*represented the richest and the most rewarding spiritual, cultural and political choice that he could make at the time...it brought religion, in the form of a readily understandable Slavic rite, close to the people and gave a powerful impetus to the development of a national culture*" (p. 36). Literature, education and the arts in Kievan Russia thus came under the influence of the church.

(5) Saints Over a period of time, and often delayed or opposed by church leadership in Constantinople, the Kievan church canonized saints. Vladimir, the baptizer of Russia, and his mother Olga, the first famous woman in Russian history and first Christian ruler of Kiev, became saints. Saints Anthony (982-1073) and Theodius (d. 1074) were ascetic monks who created and organized the Monastery of the Caves near Kiev. Not only the struggles of the soul, but social service to the needy--whether princes or the hungry poor--became the model of Russia's saint inspired monastic communities.

f. Dvoeverie (dvoh-yeh-vyer-EE-yeh) Despite the impact of Vladimir's decision to accept Orthodox Eastern Christianity, all classes and peoples did not immediately drop pre-Christian ways. The extent and content of belief in these lower classes is a matter of scholarly dispute.

The term dvoeverie describes popular Russian religion. When pagan beliefs and practices are preserved under the veneer of Christianity, that is dvoeverie. In the borderlands and within rural communities during Vladimir's time, pagan survivals remained. Some argue that for the masses, even to this present day, dvoeverie characterizes popular religion (See "Dvoeverie and Popular Religion" by Eve Levin in Seeking God: The Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia, ed. Stephen Batalden, pp. 31-33).

2. Mongol Invasion and Rule

(@1240-1480) Under Genghis Khan (JENG-gis KAHN), Mongols (MONG-gahl, called Tartars [TAHR-tahr] or Tatars in early Russian sources) sacked Kiev in 1240. Showing internal strength and great administrative flexibility, the Orthodox Church survived throughout this period. Aspects of church life under the Mongols include the following.

a. Moral prestige **Though later moving to Moscow, the "Metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia" or head of the Orthodox Church in Russia was respected by the Mongol Khans. Exempt from taxes and reporting directly to the patriarch in Constantinople, the metropolitan was a moral and political power throughout Mongol rule.**

b. Land holdings **During the period, church-held lands became attractive to peasants due, in part, to the peace, stability and good management practices of monk overseers.**

Donations of lands to the church flourished as estates were given in exchange for prayers for one's soul. By the end of the era, some estimates project that the church owned nearly 25 percent of the cultivated land.

c. Monastic communities **Monasteries became centers of Russian culture and learning as well as theological centers. Monks established scores of monasteries throughout the northeast wilderness areas.**

(1) Hesychast practice **This trend of thought within Eastern Orthodoxy was spread by monks who solidified their ideas at monasteries on Mount Athos in Greece. Hesychast (HES-ah-kast) thought, from the Greek word for quiet, claimed that Christian asceticism and spirituality would lead to the "light" of God. It contributed to the perpetuation of Eastern Orthodox spirituality under Turkish rule.**

Interaction by visiting Russian monks to Mt. Athos helped spur monastic revivals in northern Russia in the last half of the 14th century. Iconography, and the works of Russian iconographer Andrey Rublev, also benefited from the constant interchange with the center for Hesychasm at Mount Athos.

(2) St. Sergius of Radonezh (SUHR-jee-ahs, @1314-1392) This esteemed saint founded a monastery north of Moscow. It soon became one of the greatest religious and cultural centers of the country. St. Sergius stressed humility, kindness, brotherhood, love, help to others, work and learning in addition to a life of contemplation and observance. His burial place in one of the Holy Trinity monastery chapels still brings many pilgrims.

d. Ritual

The aesthetic side of faith--liturgy, continuous prayer, fasting, observing church holidays and the ecclesiastical calendar, icon painting and church architecture--developed. While ethical and social concerns also received attention, the church became a primary means of expressing Russian cultural aspirations under Mongol rule.

e. "Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia"

With the collapse of Kiev during Mongol rule, the Orthodox metropolitan had no established home.

A metropolitan (bishop of the metropolitan or mother city) is the provincial head of the Eastern Orthodox Church. A patriarch--who rules a whole section of the church--would not come about until 1589.

In 1326, Metropolitan Peter died while staying in Moscow. Canonized and worshipped as a saint, Peter's presence gave prestige to Moscow. Two years later, Ivan Kalita ("John the Moneybag"), Prince of Moscow,

invited Peter's successor Theognost to settle in Moscow. Over time, the city soon became a Russian spiritual center.

During princely quarrels and struggles, metropolitans intervened with advice, admonition and sometimes excommunication. St. Sergius's Holy Trinity Monastery north of Moscow also soon rivaled the Monastery of the Caves near Kiev.

f. Possessors and Non-possessors

One theological controversy in the medieval Russian Church concerned the association of church leadership with the ruling authorities. Joseph of Volok, who led the "possessors," argued for a close union of the all-powerful ruler and a rich, strong church.

Nil Sorskii and the "elders from beyond the Volga" or "non-possessors" objected to church wealth and monastic landholding. He argued that monks must be poor, work and remain "dead to the world." The state also has no right to interfere with religious matters. Contemplation, inner light and working for spiritual perfection, rather than formalism and ritualism, should be the goal.

A church council of 1503 decided in favor of the possessors--though the issues raised continue within Eastern Orthodox circles (and most church bodies) to this day.

II. The Third Rome

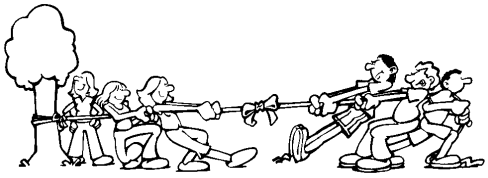
"...the State is transformed into the Church, will ascend and become a Church over the whole world...the glorious destiny ordained for the Orthodox Church. This star will arise in the east!"

-- Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, p. 75.

With the fall of Rome in 476 (being overrun by Ostrogoths--barbarian invaders) and Constantinople in

1453 (this "Second Rome" being subdued by Turkish Muslims), no real place of Eastern Orthodox imperial (civic) authority existed. In Russia, Kiev and Moscow vied to become the principal seat of Russian Orthodoxy throughout the country.

1. Origins of the Moscow Patriarchy



a. Moscow--Kiev tensions In 1448, Moscow's newly elected Orthodox Church leader Jonas assumed the title, "Metropolitan of all Russia." The church became administratively independent of external authority. In 1458, Roman Catholic leadership appointed another "metropolitan of Kiev and all of Russia" in Kiev, at the time controlled by Poland. The tendency of Moscow and the Ukraine to go their separate ways thus received official sanction, a pattern which creates tensions even to the present day.

b. Moscow as the "Third Rome" Under Ivan III, the Great (ruled 1462-1505), Moscow increasingly viewed itself as the last true bulwark of orthodoxy. Eastern Orthodox ritual became closely attached to legislative ceremony. Ivan IV the Dread (ruled 1533-1584) presided over a great council of Russian bishops in 1551, determining issues of discipline, liturgy and canonization of saints, in practice giving Moscow "Third Rome" status. Terminology such as "holy Russian land," or "holy Russia" began to surface.

Then, in 1589, the patriarch of Constantinople, Jeremias II was in Russia raising funds for Eastern Orthodox causes.

Under pressure from his Russian hosts, and possibly seeing an avenue to increase contributions to his cause, Jeremias II established Moscow's metropolitan Job as "patriarch of Moscow and all Russia." Confirmed by the other patriarchs (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem), Russian Orthodoxy thus achieved the prestigious fifth patriarchy.

2. Patriarch/Tzar Relations

A harmonious relationship between emperor and patriarch, a tradition amongst many of the Eastern Orthodox patriarchies, never really took hold in Russia. Secular political ideology and goals, influenced in part by western European practice and Asiatic totalitarianism, most always took first place.

Russian patriarchs, though influential, were often subservient to the state. Though standard bearers of culture and the "Russian soul," they often were quite powerless. Giving advice, consolation or occasional excommunication complemented their specific ecclesiastic tasks.

3. Union of Brest

(1596) Eastern Orthodoxy in the Ukraine, since 1569 under Polish control, increasingly felt the pressure of Roman Catholic thought and practice--especially within the church hierarchy.

The Union of Brest in 1596 established the Uniate (Y*OO*-nee-at) Church. This Ukrainian Catholic Church recognized and followed leadership of the Roman Catholic pope in Rome. It retained however, administrative autonomy, Eastern Orthodox ritual, practice and custom, and Old Church Slavonic (the first Slavonic literary language which especially influenced the development of the Russian literary language). In everyday worship, most ordinary people could not differentiate between the two churches.

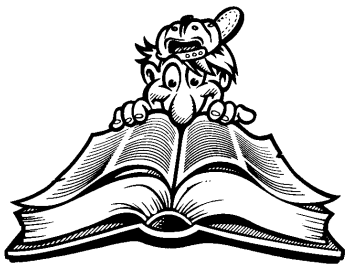
The union violently split the orthodox community in the Ukraine. Polish rule sided with the Union of Brest. Most orthodox bishops supported the union, while many orthodox parishioners did not.

4. Time of Troubles (1598-1613)

During the famine, plague and civil unrest of these dismal years, Russian Orthodoxy gained authority and prestige. Through organization, with clergy or monastic representatives being close to the people, the church instilled within the common populace a sense of resolve and moral strength to endure hard trials and tribulations.

5. Nikon Crisis and the Old Believers

a. Patriarch Nikon (held office from 1652-1658)



This strong-willed patriarch wanted to restore the prestige and power of the church. Going contrary to traditional Russian Orthodox practice, he declared the office of patriarch was superior to that of the tzar. As part of Nikon's efforts to revitalize orthodoxy, he led a drive to reform church liturgical books and practices (liturgy being the set form of church worship).

Eventually, he pushed his power and the authority of his position too far. A church council deposed and defrocked him, and he ended his days in exile in an obscure monastery.

b. The Controversy Church liturgical books, originally translated from Greek manuscripts, suffered corruption through many centuries. Mistakes crept into church practice. Patriarch Nikon's solution was to select the most current Greek manuscripts, issue a new translation, and enforce exact compliance in all Russian Orthodox Churches. Ritual reform was also included. Nikon advocated the making of the sign of the cross with three fingers as the Greeks did, rather than the traditional two.

c. The Schism (raskol) Millions of lower clergy and laity rejected the reforms. These Raskol or "Old Believers" saw Moscow as the last refuge of Orthodox practice.

Why accept Greek influence? Why go against the untainted tradition of a religion which could not be improved? The Old Believers rejected the new sign of the cross, the corrected spelling of the name of Jesus, and other reforms. Apocalyptic views among the faithful saw Nikon as an anti-Christ figure.

d. Resulting persecution In the ensuing persecution aimed at the schismatics, Archpriest Avvakim (ah-VAH-kim, Habakkuk), whose autobiography is a great document of faith (entitled Zhitie, it is the first Russian autobiography and one of the major works of early Russian literature), was burned at the stake in 1682. The Old Believer's Monastery in Soloveiskii fell to a siege from 1668-1676. In a manner similar to the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas, from 1672-1691 some 20,000 Old Believers burned themselves alive in 37 communal habitats rather than submit to Nikon's reforms.

e. Impact The Raskol controversy, the only major schism within the Russian Orthodox Church, gives the following indications of Russian religious culture.

(1) Loss of Orthodox vitality One immediate result to the Russian Orthodox Church was the loss of many of the most devoted and active members. This loss prepared the way for Orthodox power-limiting reforms under Peter the Great.

(2) Aesthetic dimension of worship The whole dispute shows the depth with which many Orthodox adherents value ritual, ceremony and formalism in their worship and practice. Worship tradition--as an underlying bond and basis for life--is not something to be taken lightly.

(3) Nikon's reforms The liturgical reforms, introduced by Patriarch Nikon, received confirmation by a great council of the church, attended by two other Eastern Orthodox patriarchs, in 1666-1667.

(4) Old Believer practice During the 18th century, Old Believer polity underwent reform. A significant number of Russians followed Old Believer thought before, during and after the 1917 revolution. The trend of thought survives to this day.

III. Imperial Russia (1682-1917)

1. Reforms of Peter the Great (ruled 1682-1725)

Due in part to the humiliation experienced by his father, Tsar Alexis, at the hands of Patriarch Nikon, and to Peter the Great's importation of Western ideals modeled after Protestant Europe, great changes took place in church/state polity under Peter's rule.

a. "Holy Governing Synod" When Patriarch Adrian died in 1700, the patriarchy remained vacant. In 1721, Tzar Peter abolished the patriarchy

altogether, transforming the government of the church into a department of state. Ten clerics made up a "Holy Governing Synod" to take care of church business. A lay official, called the Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod, ensured that all deliberations were legally correct. A detailed Spiritual Regulation (Dukhovny Reglament) served as the bylaws for all religious activities in Russia.

Subdued by the Old Believer controversy, Orthodox Church leaders acquiesced to the plan. Other Eastern Patriarchs even approved of the setup. As a result, the Russian government in effect controlled church organization, possessions and policies. This arrangement lasted until 1917.

b. Impact Other results occurring in the Orthodox Church of Russia during Peter's rule include:

(1) Education Through the Kievan academy, strong theological education, patterned after a Western model, became normative for church leadership. Church schools were strengthened and the standards of living/education for secular clergy (priests to the masses) improved.

(2) Mission activity Missionary efforts in Asia continued. Spiritual writers and saints carried on the church's work. Monastic revival, under Kievan scholar Paissy Velichkovsky (1722-1794), took place.

(3) Tzar oversight Clearly, the church became even more subservient to the secular state. Any attempts at challenging the state's power over the church met with failure.

2. Imperial Russia

The following themes address issues affecting the church which took place after Peter the Great, up until the Revolution of 1917.

a. Ober-Procurator During the 19th century, tzars increasingly relinquished "hands on" control of the church and left it with the Ober-Procurator. This body achieved cabinet rank. The Ober-Procurator thus functioned as intended--it ruled the church.

b. Land By the time of Alexander I, "*Church and state were probably linked more closely in Russia than in any other European country*" (Paul Welty, The Human Expression, p. 813). Clergy in leadership positions became a powerful class. Monasteries became centers of culture and learning. Monks oversaw large tracts of land, inhabited by thousands of serfs. A rigid caste system--with the clergy as one of the classes--inhibited prophetic church influence upon the society at large.

In 1763-64, Catherine the Great completed a process of secularizing church lands, thus divesting the Church of its huge real estate holdings. These lands and their attendant serfs went, in the form of grants, to Catherine's favorites of the gentry class. Serfs comprised 49 percent of the population during her rule.

c. Parish clergy decline The annual subsidy granted the church after land secularization proved insufficient to support common clergy.

Many of these clergy worked in the fields alongside of their parishioners. Over time, education standards declined drastically. Religious training of the masses suffered. In addition, effects of the Enlightenment marginalized the church's influence. Rather than being central to Russian life and culture, in the eyes of most government officials and the educated populace, the church became a neglected, peripheral department.

d. Education and monasticism In spite of the above declines, theological education, biblical translation and research developed. Between 1769-1842, the church established four theological academies or graduate schools in major metropolitan centers (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kiev and Kazan). In each of the 67 dioceses (jurisdictions under a bishop) the Russian Orthodox Church established a seminary.

In small monasteries, individual spiritual leaders came to serve as advisors, confessors and living examples of the spiritual life. These elders (startsy) attracted the masses of common people and some of the intellectual class. St. Seraphim of Sarov (SER-ah-fim, 1759-1833) revived the Hesychast tradition. Writers such as Gogol, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky also came under the influence of these holy leaders.

e. Missions The theological academy in Kazan specialized in missions to Islam. By 1903, Orthodox liturgy was translated into over 20 languages in the Kazan region. In 1822, the church sent Ivan Veniaminov to Alaska to continue mission work there. His work among the Aleuts, Eskimos and Tlingit Native Americans continues to this day. Given the name Innocent, he was the first Eastern Orthodox bishop to live on American soil (1840).

f. Russification and aggressive orthodoxy Russification, which sought imposition of Russian language and culture upon the increasingly diverse nationalities of the Russian state, became a policy under Alexander III (ruled 1881-1894). Though not identical with Russification, a militant orthodoxy also arose which sought to expand the church. The close linkage between Russian Orthodoxy and Russian culture in general enabled orthodox expansion under Russification policies.

g. Prior to World War I On the eve of World War I, Russian Orthodoxy was the strongest and richest of the Balkan/Middle East Eastern Orthodox Churches. Statistics for 1914 include over 50,000 priests, 21,330 monks and 73,299 nuns. Thousands of schools and missions came under its purview (Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropaedia, Vol 6, p. 159).

Prior to the October Revolution, Tzar Nicholas II organized plans to convene an all-Russian Church Council, whose intended purpose was re-establishment of the church's independence. To authenticate newly desired church prestige, plans to restore the patriarchate also surfaced.

IV. The Russian Revolution and Soviet Period

1. Communist Ideology and Religion

Communist theory sees religion as the "opiate of the masses," a tool which exploits the "have nots." Religion becomes a means by which the "haves" keep people obedient and docile.

Russian practice during the revolution, where the church sided with the White Army in the Civil War, seemed to support this Communist assessment.

Communists thought once the social basis was gone (class struggle eliminated), religion would cease to exist. That religion, and the Orthodox Church, endured under Communism led Soviet leadership to compromise their position, and restrict religious practice, hoping for its eventual decay.

2. Patriarchy and the "Living Church"

Six days after the Bolshevik take-over, a Russian Orthodox council of over 550 delegates elected Metropolitan Tikhon of Moscow as patriarch. Tikhon (TEE-kon) thus became

the first patriarch since Peter the Great's reforms, some 225 years earlier.

a. Early effects of the Communist Revolution

On 20 January 1918, Bolsheviks decreed the church would lose all legal rights, including that of property. Patriarch Tikhon responded by excommunicating (cutting off from all church fellowship) the "open or disguised enemies of Christ," a vague reference to the new regime in power. For a time, the church continued to maintain influence, as evidenced by Tikhon's pronouncements on political matters affecting the moral climate of the country.

b. The "Living" or "Renovated" Church

In February 1922, the Communist government announced that all valuable objects within the churches would be confiscated. Funds thus raised would assist starving Russians in the Volga region. Patriarch Tikhon wanted guarantees that the valuables would indeed help the starving. None came.

Some clergy cooperated with the Communists and were ready to overthrow Tikhon. While the Patriarch was under house arrest, this group took over his office. They led a schism, called the "Renovated" or "Living" Church, and broke the internal unity of the Russian Orthodox Church under Communist rule. Many bishops and clergy loyal to Tikhon were imprisoned or executed. "Renovated" leaders also allowed married priests to hold high church office, also a break from established church practice.

c. Conformism

Released from house arrest, Patriarch Tikhon condemned the schismatics. More importantly, however, he affirmed that he was "not an enemy of the Soviet government" and withdrew any opposition to the authorities.

After Tikhon's death in 1925, metropolitan Sergius, though not a patriarch until 1943 but the "holder of the position," likewise verbalized his loyalty to the government.

Referring to the joys and sorrows of the motherland--though not the atheistic leadership--Sergius advocated, *"We wish to be Orthodox and at the same time to realize that the Soviet Union is our civil motherland, whose joys and achievements are our joys and achievements, and whose failures are our failures"* (Religion in the Soviet Republics, pp. 74-75).

3. Persecution

"During the first five years of Soviet power, the Bolsheviks executed 28 Russian Orthodox bishops and over 1,200 Russian Orthodox priests. Many others were imprisoned or exiled. Communists harassed and persecuted believers. Most seminaries were closed, and publication of most religious material was prohibited" **(Library of Congress Country Study--Soviet Union, p. 198).**

Under Joseph Stalin in the late 1920s and 1930s, renewed persecution again affected thousands of the faithful. Still, according to an unpublished census of 1936, some 55 percent of Soviet citizens identified themselves as religious.

Yet, "by 1939 only three or four Orthodox bishops and 100 churches could officially function: the church was practically suppressed" (Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropaedia, Volume 6, p. 160).

4. World War II

To arouse support for the "Great Patriotic War," Stalin relaxed restrictions on Russian Orthodoxy. To build national morale, instill patriotism, and integrate territories acquired before and during the war, Stalin reopened churches and ended the "Renovated" schism. Sergius was elected patriarch

in 1943. His successor, Patriarch Alexis who served from 1945-1970, opened some 25,000 churches.

5. Post World War II Developments

a. Khrushchev pressure Nikita Khrushchev, from 1959-1964 instigated a new wave of anti-religious feeling and reduced the number of open churches to 10,000.

b. Restricted oversight Later, authorities allowed establishment of a few theological schools, a limited number of seminarians, and the opening of a few new churches.

In return, the Orthodox Church maintained surface loyalty to the Communist regime, supported international peace campaigns, and co-operated in bringing eastern Poland's two to three million Uniates under Orthodox rather than Roman Catholic control.

Though tolerated under strict controls, and limited to only religious rather than social or educational functions, the Communists continued to view the Orthodox Church as an enemy.

6. Millennial celebration

1988 marked the 1,000 year anniversary of the founding of the Russian Orthodox Church. Some sanctuaries were reopened or restored.

Also, social problems in the Soviet Union--alcoholism, corruption, poor work habits, weakening family life--drew attention to the need for the church to assist the government in bringing societal renewal. In an April 1987 meeting with Patriarch Pimen, Mikhail Gorbachev advocated new state-church relations. Said Gorbachev, *"Believers are Soviet people, workers and patriots, and they have the full right to express their convictions with dignity"* (Christianity Today, 16 Sep 1988, p. 19).

7. Patriarchs of the 20th Century

The succession of patriarchs leading in this century includes Tikhon (1918-1925); Sergius 1943-1945); Alexis I (1945-1970); Pimen (1971-1990) and Alexis II (1990 to present).

V. Current Status--Russian Orthodox Church

1. Impact of Clandestine Religion

Estimates vary as to the extent and depth of faith practiced in underground churches during the Communist era. One scholar estimated some 48 million underground Christians during Brezhnev's time. A Moscow priest during the same period could also say, *"The 'catacomb' Church, thanks to the diligent 'work' done by the KGB...is practically non-existent"* (Nathaniel Davis, A Long Walk to Church, p. 127).

Whatever the estimate, faithful underground church activity centered in at least the following three areas. The impact of these steadfast adherents contributes, in part, to the renewal of Orthodox Church practice today.

a. Village life

Family members and believing neighbors maintained religious practice as best they could. Pious Christians preserved icons and developed a hidden faith practice. Arranged meetings with priests--often done in secret and based upon personal trust--were orchestrated for burials, baptisms and blessings.

b. Prisons

Courageous prisoner-priests often provided services in the Gulag. Some prisoners came into first contact with Christianity within the prison system. Once returned to society, their methods of concealing religious activity, honed through prison life, were well used to propagate and strengthen faith.

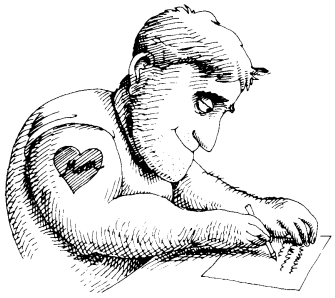
c. Illegal, secret orthodox underground movements

Whether existing within coordinated, fully organized structures, or practiced in flexible, isolated, informal communities, secret underground churches did exist. A "True Orthodox Church" and "True Orthodox Christians" prevailed throughout Soviet domination. Services were held in homes. Some of the faithful lived as hermits in forests. Others became wanderers--itinerant, apocalyptic, pious pilgrims.

2. Freedom-of-Conscience Laws

On 9 October and 10 November 1990, two laws passed by the Russian Parliament--the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, and the Law on Freedom of Worship--appeared in print.

These extensive laws disestablished orthodoxy as the State Church and allowed individuals to pursue religious interests based upon their own consciences.



"...each and every citizen shall have the right to select and hold religious beliefs and to freely change them.

***A citizen of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic may individually or jointly with fellow believers confess any faith, perform religious rites without...hindrance, voluntarily join and leave religious organizations*" (Section II., Article 15, Religion in the Soviet Republics, p. 34).**

These laws are examples of Mikhail Gorbachev's (whose mother and grandmother were Orthodox believers) policy of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) applied to religion.

3. Religious resurgence

Since the fall of the Communist regime, a renewal of religious interest and practice has taken place.

Not only Russian Orthodoxy, but other faiths flourish as well. Jewish schools in Moscow are reopening. Chechens, in part as a result of the recent conflict, are returning to Muslim practice. The opening of Buddhist monasteries in the Kalmykia and Lake Baikal regions also occurs.

Within Russian Orthodoxy, the following indicators show the extent of church renewal.

- **Christ the Savior Cathedral** **Dedication of this worship facility in Moscow took place on 4 September 1997. The original massive church which held 10,000 faithful was blown apart by Stalin's order in 1931.**

- **Chaplaincy** **Russian military leaders led requests for a chaplaincy within the Army.**

- **Politics** **Candidates are rumored to want "God on our side."**

- **Parishes** **The number of parishes in Moscow grew from 50 to 200 during 1991-1996.**

- **Priest activity** **Recovering confiscated church property, restoring desecrated churches, ordaining new priests and reuniting congregations steeped in atheism for more than three generations are but part of the tasks engaging Russian Orthodox clergy.**

4. Russian Orthodox/Ecumenical Patriarchate Rift

On 23 February 1996, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexsy II omitted from the day's liturgical prayers the name of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Istanbul (Constantinople, the "first-among-equals" and pre-eminent leader of Orthodox Christians worldwide).

This break in communion was, according to the Christian Century, the "*first time in the 1,008-year history of the Russian Orthodox Church that the well-being of the ecumenical patriarch [historical Constantinople head] was not mentioned*" deliberately in liturgical prayer (20-27 March 1996, p. 319).

The rift centers over control of Estonia's 60,000 member Orthodox Church. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Ecumenical Patriarch now claims jurisdiction over the Estonia Church. Historically, Constantinople (Istanbul) held this position with Estonia from 1923-1940.

Russian Orthodox leaders also claim historical precedent. Mission efforts (Russian Orthodox missionaries founded the Estonian church in the 13th century) and on again--off again oversight throughout the centuries provides reason enough for their close ties. Some Russian Orthodox also accuse the Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarch of trying to become a Vatican-type Pope of the orthodox world.

During the controversy, a few Russian Orthodox theologians criticized the Istanbul based orthodox headquarters of the Ecumenical Patriarch as "generals without an army," a reference to the small number of believers under its present jurisdiction.

Such a remark, claimed one representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch, shows no sensitivity to the orthodox tradition and ethos. Churches are not measured by the numbers of practicing believers, rather on the basis of martyrs, saints and confessors who witnessed courageously throughout history.

In April 1996, a temporary compromise patched over the rift, and though relations between the two churches seem to be improving, a threat of schism remains.

5. 26 September 1997 Orthodox Protection Law

On 26 September 1997, President Boris Yelstin signed into law a bill which passed the Russian Parliament. To Western eyes, this law restricts religious freedom and replaces the earlier 1990 Freedom of Conscience laws.

Commonly identified as a law which protects the Orthodox Church, this newly signed legislation gives special status to any religious groups recognized 15 years ago, when Russia was a part of the Soviet Union.

Four groups qualify--the traditional Orthodox Church, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. These religious bodies have full privileges.

Other groups--Roman Catholics, Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, dissident Russian Orthodox branches, newer Islamic and Buddhist sects--are sharply restricted. These faith groups are unable to run schools, distribute literature, or invite foreigners to work as clergy or evangelists. Each year, these religious bodies must undergo a time consuming and restrictive process of re-registration. Local authorities will carry out the law.

To understand how such legislation came about, words by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, during his October 1997 visit to New York, may assist. Said the Ecumenical Patriarch, in words which describe how other Christian groups compete (through proselytizing) with Orthodoxy, *"Many Protestant missionaries from the West whose voices were not heard during the decades of oppression have come not to lend support, but to convert Orthodox believers. These so-called missionaries claim to be Christians, but they behave as wolves in sheep's clothing"* (New York Times, 25 Oct. 1997).

Vocabulary List: Russian Orthodox Religious History

Brest, Union of 1569 decision in the Ukraine which recognized Catholic practice as following the leadership of the pope in Rome while allowing Eastern Orthodox ritual, practice and custom.

Byzantine (BIZ-ahn-teen) Relating to the Eastern Roman Empire, A.D. 324/330-1453

Church of the Savior Cathedral Moscow worship facility, originally finished in 1883, which celebrated the Russian stand against Napoleon in 1812. Stalin ordered it blown up in 1931. The dedication of a newly completed Cathedral patterned after the original occurred in September 1997.

Constantinople (the Second Rome) Eastern capital of the Roman Empire, formerly called Byzantium, currently named Istanbul. Location of the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Dvoeverie (dvoh-yeh-vyer-EE-yeh) Popular Russian religion where pagan beliefs and practices are preserved under the veneer of Christianity.

Ecumenical Patriarch Title given to the patriarch of Constantinople, the "first among equals."

Freedom of Conscience Laws, 1990 Laws passed by the Russian Parliament which enabled Soviet citizens to select, hold or change religious beliefs as their consciences saw fit.

Glasnost Openness. Free channels of expression, movement and honesty became more tolerated in Soviet government under Gorbachev.

Great Patriotic War In an effort to arouse patriotism, national feeling and morale during World War II, Stalin relaxed some restrictions imposed by Communism--including those on the Orthodox church--and identified the war by this term.

Hagia Sophia (high-EE-ah suh-FEE-uh) Constantinople's Church of Divine Wisdom, the center of Eastern Orthodoxy. In the 1400s, it became a mosque. Currently, the building is a museum.

Hesychast (HES-ah-kast) From the Greek word for quiet, this term identifies a school of Christian asceticism and spirituality advanced at Mt. Athos in Greece. It spread, through monks, to Russian Orthodox monasteries.

Holy Governing Synod Peter the Great's reform of Orthodox leadership where ten clerics, with a lay official head, determined church practice rather than a patriarch.

Liturgy (LIT-ahr-jee) Formal public worship and prayer service

Metropolitan Provincial leader within Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The metropolitan is bishop of the metropolis or mother city.

Mongol (MONG-gahl) Nomad warriors from Central Asia who conquered and ruled Russia, 1240-1480

Mt. Athos (ATH-ohs) Greek mountain, home of many orthodox monasteries, and center of Hesychast (quiet asceticism) practice. Through wandering monks, the ideas of Mt. Athos spread to Russian Orthodox monasteries.

Nikon Russian Orthodox patriarch who held office from 1652-1658. Nikon instituted liturgical reform, prompting the Old Believer schism.

Ober-Procurator Term for the civilian official who headed the "Holy Governing Synod" instituted by Peter the Great to oversee the Russian Orthodox Church

Old Church Slavonic The first Slavonic literary language which especially influenced development of Russian

Orthodox Protection Law, September 1997 Law signed in to effect by President Boris Yeltsin which gave only four religious bodies--Orthodoxy, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism--full privileges. All others must undergo time-consuming restrictions.

Ostrogoth (OST-troh-goth) Warrior barbarians who sacked Rome in A.D. 476.

Patriarch An Eastern Orthodox leader who rules a whole section (Russia, Antioch, Jerusalem, Constantinople) of the church.

Perestroika Restructuring. Production focused on what people desired to consume, not on state mandated items alone.

Possessors/Non-possessors Controversy in the medieval Russian Orthodox Church over those who advocate a close union between the powerful ruler and rich, strong church (possessors) and those who thought the church should concern itself with contemplation and spiritual perfection with little interruption from the state (non-possessors).

Raskol Term for "Old Believers" who did not want to change their liturgical practice within the Russian Orthodox Church.

"Renovated" or "Living" Church Group of clergy who cooperated with the Communists in 1922, breaking the internal unity of the Russian Orthodox Church until 1941.

Russification Imposition of Russian language, culture and customs upon the diverse nationalities and ethnic groups within the late 19th century Russian state.

St. Cyril and St. Methodius (SIR-ahl, A.D. 827-869; mah-THOO-dee-ahs, @825-885) "Apostles to the Slavs" who spread Eastern Orthodoxy to the Slavic peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. These two brothers introduced the Cyrillic (suh-RIL-lik) alphabet into Balkan, and eventually Russian, society.

St. Seraphim (SER-ah-fim, 1759-1833) Reviver of the Hesychast tradition who influenced many small monasteries in the early 19th century.

St. Sergius (SUHR-jee-ahs, @1314-1392) A Russian Orthodox saint, known for his kindness, humility, love, help to others, work, learning in addition to life of contemplation and observance. Founded a monastery north of Moscow.

Tartar (TAHR-tahr) An early Russian term for Mongols. Also written Tatar.

Third Rome With the fall of Rome in 410, and the fall of Constantinople in 1453 (the "Second Rome"), Russian Orthodox faithful see Moscow as the "Third Rome" or head of Eastern Orthodox practice in the world.

Tikhon, Patriarch In Oct 1917, Russian Orthodox delegates meeting in Moscow elected this Metropolitan of Moscow Patriarch. He was the first to serve in this capacity for some 225 years. Tikhon died in 1925.

Underground Church Practice of the faith under Communism in unconventional, clandestine ways

Uniate (Y*OO*-nee-at) Another name for the Ukrainian Catholic Church

Vladimir I (vlah-DEE-mir, @956-1015) Grandson of Rurik who ruled Kiev from 980-1015. Under Vladimir, Russian adopted Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

"When you were needed, you were there.
No, it wasn't always easy,
No, it wasn't always fair.
But when freedom called, you answered,
When you were needed, you were there."
General Dennis J. Reimer, Army song read for speech entitled,
"Women in Military Service for America,"
17 Oct 1997, Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland.

Review Quiz: Russian Orthodox Religious History

Part 1--Fill in the Blanks

Fill in the blanks with the most correct word listed immediately following the section. Not all words listed will be used.

(1) _____ established Christianity as Rome's religion. He also chose (2) _____ as Rome's eastern capital. (3) _____ sacked Rome in A. D. 476, leaving Constantinople, another name for the eastern capital, as the "Second Rome." The (4) _____ or Church of Divine Wisdom at the time (6th century) was the largest and most splendid Christian structure.

The debate over the extent of pre-Christian pagan practice which continues in popular Russian religion centers on the term (5) _____.

(6)_____, also called (7) _____ came from the East and sacked Kiev in 1240.

Hesychast practice - a quiet, ascetic, inwardly focused ritual - entered Russian Orthodoxy from interactions and visits of Russian monks to Mount (8) _____ in Greece.

A (9) _____ is the most prestigious leader in Eastern Orthodox circles.

The (10) _____ Church, established at the Union of Brest in 1569, follows the Roman Catholic Pope but practices Eastern Orthodox ritual.

Nebo	**Mongols**	**Constantine**
dvoeverie	**Uniate**	**Hagia Sophia**
Sophia Loren	**Byzantium**	**Tartars**
patriarch	**Ostrogoths**	**Athos**
Acropolis	**Metropolitan**	

Part 2--Multiple Choice

Place the letter of the most correct response in the blank provided.

1. _____ From the 9th century to 1448, _____ religious leaders served as intermediaries for the Orthodox Russians and Constantinople.

A. Greek
B. Bulgarian
C. Serbian

2. _____ The Kievan prince who adopted orthodoxy as the religion of the Rus in AD 987-988 was

A. Rurik.
B. Varangian.
C. Vladimir.

3. _____ In countries under Byzantium rule, church and state relations tended to

A. be distinctly separated.
B. commingle.
C. be characterized by constant friction and animosity.

4. _____ One factor leading to increase in church land holdings in medieval Russia was

A. estates were given to the church in exchange for prayers for one's soul upon death.
B. Tartar rulers gave land to the church to improve state/ church relations.
C. a potato famine caused many to be suspicious of land's value so land owners gave it to the church.

5. _____ In orthodoxy, the most common location identified as the "Third Rome" is

A. Kiev.
B. Jerusalem.
C. Moscow.

6. _____ Patriarch Nikon (held office from 1652-1658), in seeking to restore the prestige and power of the Church, led a drive to

A. reform church liturgy and practice.
B. undermine the influence of Mikhail Romanov.
C. create scientific inventions - and developed an early theory of how a camera works.

7. _____ The "Old Believer" (Raskol) schism

A. quickly died down and had little long-term impact.
B. led to great persecution of Old Believers, whose tradition continues to this day.
C. infused the Russian Orthodox Church with new vitality and devotion.

8. _____ Concerning the establishment of the "Holy Governing Synod," other Eastern Orthodox patriarchs

A. thought the plan was a bad one and voted it down.
B. approved of the new setup.
C. were non-committal and left the matter with the Russians alone.

9. _____ Influence of small monastic communities can readily be seen in the literary works of

A. Pasternak and Chekhov.
B. Dostoyevski and Tolstoy.
C. Turgenev and Pushkin.

10. _____ Prior to World War I, the Russian Orthodox Church was _____ of the Balkan/Middle East Eastern Orthodox Churches.

A. the smallest and most oppressed
B. the strongest and the richest
C. ostracized and the least cooperative

11. _____ Communist ideology thought that once class struggle was eliminated, religion

A. would cease to exist.
B. lead a counter-revolution so it should be extinguished.
C. would be like a drug - the opiate of the people.

12. _____ During the "Living" or "Renovated" Church controversy of 1922, many bishops and clergy loyal to Patriarch Tikhon

A. ended up in jail or executed.
B. received prestigious positions in the Communist hierarchy.
C. fought for the practice of married priests in high church office.

13. _____ According to reliable estimates, by 1939, the Russian Orthodox Church leadership

A. was practically suppressed.
B. continued to hold great societal influence.
C. accepted Stalin's anti-religious policies with little dissent or objection.

14. _____ During the Great Patriotic War, Stalin

A. allowed the Orthodox Church greater freedom, to enable a moral and nationalist resurgence.
B. sent every priest he could find to the Front.
C. used what churches that remained as hospitals and supply depots.

15. _____ In the 1988 millennial celebration of the Russian Orthodox Church, Soviet leadership

A. was non-committal in its attitude and support of the event.
B. drew upon church influence as a source for dealing with social problems - alcoholism, corruption, poor work habits - within the Soviet Union.
C. refused to recognize the existence of the church.

16. _____ The current (1998) Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church is

A. Albert.
B. Ivan.
C. Alexis II.

17. _____ Clandestine religion during the Communist era had special influence in village life, secret underground movements and in

A. prisons.
B. hospitals.
C. municipal licensing agencies.

18. _____ The 1990 Freedom-of-Conscience laws, wherein Russians could select, hold, or change religious or non-religious beliefs, exemplified the perestroika and glasnost policies of

A. Nicholai Gogol.
B. Boris Yeltsin.
C. Mikhail Gorbachev.

19. _____ Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow, a massive structure holding 10,000 people, was dedicated in 1883 to celebrate Russia's stand against Napoleon in 1812. Blown up by Stalin in 1931, the site currently

A. is the world's largest swimming pool.
B. houses a newly rebuilt cathedral similar to the original.
C. is an open square dedicated to all who fell in the Great Patriotic War.

20. _____ The 26 September 1997 law, signed by Boris Yeltsin and passed by the Russian Parliament, to Western minds seems to

A. restrict religious freedom and replace the 1990 Freedom of Conscience laws.
B. exemplify a new spirit of tolerance and understanding within the Russian Orthodox Church.
C. protect new religious groups - Roman Catholics, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, Latter Day Saints, Islamic sects- within the Russian Federation.

Part 3--True/False

Place a T or F in the blank provided.

1. _____ Liturgy is the term given to formal, public service worship rites of a church.

2. _____ At the time of Vladimir I (A.D. 980-1015) Byzantine culture was suspect, underdeveloped and backward.

3. _____ Historically, Russian saints were seldom invoked in social service to the needy.

4. _____ Under Mongol (Tartar) rule (1240-1480), the Orthodox Church maintained moral prestige and respect.

5. _____ St. Sergius of Radonezh (1314-1392) stressed humility, kindness, help to others, work and learning in addition to a life of contemplation and religious observance.

6. _____ A church council in 1503 decided in favor of the "Possessors"--a close union of an all-powerful ruler and a rich, strong church.

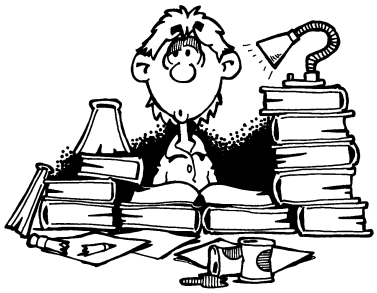
7. _____ Historically, Russian Orthodox Church patriarchs, though influential as standard bearers of culture and the "Russian soul," often were quite powerless.

8. _____ During the "Time of Troubles" (1598-1613), a time of plague, famine, disease and unrest, the Orthodox Church became marginalized, defeated, and of little societal impact.

9. _____ Tzar Peter the Great abolished the patriarchy altogether, establishing a Holy Governing Synod in its stead.

10. _____ After Catherine the Great's land reforms, many common clergy worked in the fields alongside their parishioners...church influence waned.

"Follow through."



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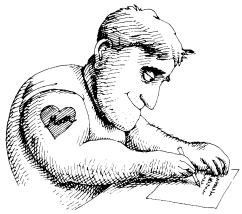

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"On the eve of the twenty-first century, throughout the world aggressive acts of religious intolerance and persecution still occur, along with the exploitation of religious and ethnic differences for ulterior and violent ends. Many people across the globe face persecution, disenfranchisement, economic deprivation and sometimes death for practicing their faith, exercising conscience, and maintaining cultural loyalties."
Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad, p. 8